

97-84132-22

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Analysis of 1932 Literary  
digest prohibition poll

[Brooklyn, N.Y.]

1932

97-84132-22

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c8- p. 24 cm. [Brooklyn, N.Y.]  
1932.

187801

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## TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

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4710  
JUN 10 1932

# Analysis of 1932 Literary Digest Prohibition Poll

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Brooklyn, N. Y.

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PUBLISHED—MAY, 1932

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#### ANALYSIS OF 1932 LITERARY DIGEST PROHIBITION POLL

The uncanny accuracy of past Literary Digest polls in assaying public opinion on moot questions has been such that the published results of the 1932 Prohibition Poll might be accepted without question as being approximately correct. However, before employing any of the recently published data in the following analyses, a check of the final result was made in the manner shown on Table 1.

This table, and the three succeeding, all have been compiled from data in the 1931 Statistical Abstract of the United States issued by U. S. Department of Commerce, and from the April 20, 1932, Final Report of the Literary Digest Prohibition Poll.

Table 1 indicates that amongst all persons 21 years of age and over, including unfranchised aliens and Indians, disfranchised Negroes and institutional inmates, the percentage favoring repeal is 72.4%, as compared with the Literary Digest result of 73.5% after polling a representative cross-section of the voting population. Just another check on Literary Digest accuracy.

In an effort to discover what basic indications, if any, are contained in the 1932 Literary Digest Prohibition Poll, the results were analysed from three directions, as follows—

- (1) by comparative educational standards as indicated by the percentages of illiterates in the several States
- (2) by comparative economic standards as indicated by the percentages of personal and corporation income taxes paid into the U. S. Treasury from the different States
- (3) in relation to the distribution of urban and rural population.

#### ANALYSIS BY EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

In Column F of Table 2 is shown the relation between the number of illiterates in each State and the number of persons 21 years of age and over, and in Column C the results of the Literary Digest poll.

Iowa, with the smallest proportion of illiterates (0.98%), favors repeal by 64.1%, while South Carolina, highest in illiteracy (24.68%), favors repeal by the smaller margin of 59.9%.

Kansas, least favorable to repeal (49.8%), has 1.55% of illiterates, whereas in Nevada, most favorable to repeal (88.2%), the proportion of illiterates (5.25%) is less than the average amongst all persons in the United States 21 years of age and over.

Together with the District of Columbia, the States comprise 49 political units. Separating these into two classes with the average of illiteracy (5.30%) as the dividing line, it appears that of the 17 States in which illiteracy exceeds the average 10 are less than 2 to 1 favorable to repeal. On the other hand, of the 32 States in which illiteracy is below the average, 27 favor repeal by more than 2 to 1.

Again separating the 49 political units into two classes, (1) those favoring repeal by more than 2 to 1 and (2) those less than 66.7% favorable, it appears that amongst the 34 States more than 2 to 1 favorable are included but 7 in which illiteracy exceeds the average, whereas amongst the 15 states less than 2 to 1 favorable are included 10 in which illiteracy exceeds the average.

Of the 12 States in which illiteracy does not exceed 2%, 9 favor repeal by margins greater than 2 to 1.

This analysis based upon educational standards gives clear indication that prohibition is most favored in States where, measured

by illiteracy, ignorance is relatively great, and that demand for repeal is stronger where learning is more widely diffused.

#### ANALYSIS BY ECONOMIC STANDARDS

The significance of the ratios in Column H of Table 3 is explained so that a clear understanding may be had of the following analysis based upon the economic standards of the several States.

If population were equally divided amongst the 49 political units, and if each contributed an equal share of the personal and corporation income tax returns, then the ratios throughout Column H would be 1.00.

However, some of the States have more than a pro rata share of the total population while contributing less than a pro rata share of personal and corporation income taxes, whereas other States, with less than a pro rata share of people, contribute more than their population's pro rata share of income taxes.

Thus Texas, with more than double its pro rata share of all persons 21 years of age and over, has less than a pro rata share of income tax returns, so that its ratio of income tax returns to population is less than 1.00. On the other hand, Rhode Island, with many less than a pro rata share of the total population, pays more than its people's proportionate part of income taxes, so that its ratio in Column H is greater than 1.00.

Accordingly, in this analysis by economic standards, it is to be understood that wherever the ratio, Column H of Table 3, exceeds 1.00 the State contributes more than its proportionate share of income taxes relative to the number of persons of voting age, and wherever the ratio is less than 1.00 the State pays less than its population's proportionate share.

The outstanding feature of this analysis is that it contradicts the commonly accepted notion that New York, relative to its population, has the highest personal and corporation income tax returns. Actually, little Delaware, next to the smallest in area amongst the 48 States, and third from lowest in population of the 49 political units within the United States, shows income tax returns per person of voting age more than double those of New York, and more than 6 times its population's pro rata share.

Of the 49 political units, 12 carry more than their people's proportionate share of the total income tax burden. Of these 12, all favor repeal by 72.5% or more, 10 favor repeal by more than 3 to 1, while 5 favor it by more than 4 to 1.

Of the 7 states whose ratio is less than 1.00 but more than 0.50, six favor repeal by more than 2 to 1, while the other one favors repeal by more than 3 to 2.

Of the 13 States whose ratio is less than 0.50 but at least 0.30, eight favor repeal by more than 2 to 1, two favor it by more than 3 to 2, while in the remaining three opinion is about equally divided.

Of the 17 States whose ratio is less than 0.30, eight favor repeal by more than 2 to 1, four favor it by more than 3 to 2, while in the remaining five opinion is again not far from evenly divided.

This analysis based on economic standards clearly indicates that in the self-supporting States there is a heavy preponderance of opinion favorable to repeal, whereas any considerable prohibition

sentiment is found only in the group of 30 poorest States, all of which pay less than one-half their people's pro rata shares of the income tax burden.

#### ANALYSIS BY POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

In Column J of Table 4 is shown the percentage of urban population in each of the 49 political units in continental United States as determined by the 1930 U. S. census.

Dividing these into two classes, those with more and those with less than one-half the population in cities, it appears that there are 22 with a preponderance of city dwellers, and 27 with a majority classed as rural.

Of the 22 States with a majority of people in cities, 21 favor repeal by more than 2 to 1, while the remaining one in this group, Colorado, favors repeal by more than 3 to 2.

Of the 27 States having a major portion of people outside cities, 13 favor repeal by more than 2 to 1.

A clearer understanding of the division of sentiment regarding repeal is obtained by dividing the 49 political units into three classes, (1) those with more than two-thirds of the population in cities, (2) those with less than two-thirds and more than one-third of the population in cities, and (3) those with less than one-third of the population in cities.

In the first group are 11 States. Of these, 9 favor repeal by more than 3 to 1, and the remaining two, Pennsylvania and Ohio, favor repeal by 74.7% and 72.5% respectively.

In the second group are 23 States. Of these, 16 favor repeal by more than 2 to 1.

In the third group are 15 States. Of these, only 7 favor repeal by more than 2 to 1.

In this analysis on the basis of population distribution between urban and rural, there is clear indication of a strong demand from city dwellers for repeal, while sentiment is least favorable to repeal in the group of States that is distinctly rural in character.

#### COMMENTARY

In the group of 11 political units whose populations are distinctly urban in character the aggregate number of persons of 21 years of age and over is 36,524,489, or more than 50% of those in the whole United States. Amongst this number of persons of voting age are 1,416,420 illiterates, or 3.88%, a percentage considerably lower than the average of illiteracy in the nation.

Furthermore, all but one of this group of 11 political units contribute more than their people's proportionate shares of personal and corporation income tax returns, the one exception being Ohio whose ratio of 0.90 far exceeds that of the next highest State. The aggregate income tax returns from these 11 political units exceeds 80% of the entire burden of the whole United States.

#### CONCLUSION

The ignorant, poor, and rural favor prohibition; the educated, rich, and urban demand repeal.

With ever increasingly higher standards of education throughout all the United States, with continued accretions to our national wealth, both concurrent with a rising tide of migration from farm to town, ultimate repeal of the 18th amendment is inevitable.

TABLE I

A—Persons 21 years of age and over.  
B—Percentage of persons 21 years of age and over.  
C—Literary Digest poll—percentage favoring repeal.  
D—Persons 21 years of age and over favoring repeal—A x C.

STATES	A	B	C	D
<b>NEW ENGLAND</b>				
Maine .....	487,125	0.668	69.5	338,552
New Hampshire .....	294,055	.403	68.7	202,016
Vermont .....	220,428	.302	69.6	153,418
Massachusetts .....	2,686,487	3.683	78.6	2,111,579
Rhode Island .....	421,197	.577	84.3	355,069
Connecticut .....	985,782	1.351	84.3	831,014
<b>MIDDLE ATLANTIC</b>				
New York .....	8,142,851	11.163	84.7	6,896,995
New Jersey .....	2,512,112	3.444	85.4	2,145,344
Pennsylvania .....	5,656,779	7.755	74.7	4,225,614
<b>EAST NORTH CENTRAL</b>				
Ohio .....	4,132,251	5.665	72.5	2,995,882
Indiana .....	2,008,019	2.746	67.9	1,360,450
Illinois .....	4,841,768	6.638	81.0	3,921,832
Michigan .....	2,939,409	4.030	78.0	2,292,739
Wisconsin .....	1,768,818	2.425	84.2	1,489,345
<b>WEST NORTH CENTRAL</b>				
Minnesota .....	1,537,983	2.108	76.4	1,175,019
Iowa .....	1,506,129	2.065	64.1	965,429
Missouri .....	2,269,657	3.112	70.8	1,606,917
North Dakota .....	358,182	.491	75.7	271,144
South Dakota .....	385,808	.529	68.1	262,735
Nebraska .....	812,450	1.114	62.7	509,406
Kansas .....	1,130,224	1.550	49.8	562,852
<b>SOUTH ATLANTIC</b>				
Delaware .....	148,792	.204	72.5	107,874
Maryland .....	996,928	1.367	76.6	763,647
District of Columbia .....	341,465	.468	77.7	265,318
Virginia .....	1,300,893	1.783	63.2	822,164
West Virginia .....	900,987	1.235	65.4	589,245
North Carolina .....	1,542,125	2.114	49.9	769,520
South Carolina .....	819,384	1.123	59.9	490,811
Georgia .....	1,498,567	2.054	64.5	966,576
Florida .....	866,198	1.187	74.7	647,050
<b>EAST SOUTH CENTRAL</b>				
Kentucky .....	1,422,434	1.950	67.2	955,876
Tennessee .....	1,418,144	1.944	51.5	730,344
Alabama .....	1,348,401	1.849	55.5	748,363
Mississippi .....	1,031,547	1.414	56.0	577,666
<b>WEST SOUTH CENTRAL</b>				
Arkansas .....	968,231	1.327	52.2	505,417
Louisiana .....	1,134,852	1.556	81.6	926,039
Oklahoma .....	1,287,131	1.765	54.5	701,486
Texas .....	3,220,880	4.416	60.4	1,945,412
<b>MOUNTAIN</b>				
Montana .....	318,611	.437	80.4	256,163
Idaho .....	246,770	.338	66.8	164,842
Wyoming .....	132,954	.182	77.8	103,438
Colorado .....	623,523	.855	60.6	377,855
New Mexico .....	216,956	.297	75.1	162,934
Arizona .....	244,115	.335	73.4	179,180
Utah .....	264,498	.363	68.9	182,239
Nevada .....	60,794	.083	88.2	53,620
<b>PACIFIC</b>				
Washington .....	1,010,167	1.385	76.1	768,737
Oregon .....	621,375	.852	69.7	433,098
California .....	3,864,398	5.298	76.7	2,963,986
<b>Totals &amp; Averages.....</b>	<b>72,943,624</b>	<b>100.000</b>	<b>73.5</b>	<b>*52,832,251</b>

\* Equals 72.4% of persons 21 years of age and over.

TABLE II

A—Persons 21 years of age and over.  
 E—Illiterate persons of voting age.  
 F—Percentage of illiterate persons of voting age.  
 C—Literary Digest poll—percentage favoring repeal.

STATES	A	E	F	C
<b>NEW ENGLAND</b>				
Maine .....	487,125	16,092	3.30	69.5
New Hampshire .....	294,055	9,928	3.38	68.7
Vermont .....	220,428	6,013	2.73	69.6
Massachusetts .....	2,686,487	121,925	4.54	78.6
Rhode Island .....	421,197	26,989	6.41	84.3
Connecticut .....	985,782	58,863	5.97	84.3
<b>MIDDLE ATLANTIC</b>				
New York .....	8,142,851	379,180	4.66	84.7
New Jersey .....	2,512,112	124,932	4.97	85.4
Pennsylvania .....	5,656,779	234,054	4.14	74.7
<b>EAST NORTH CENTRAL</b>				
Ohio .....	4,132,251	119,732	2.90	72.5
Indiana .....	2,003,019	42,047	2.10	67.9
Illinois .....	4,841,768	149,504	3.09	81.0
Michigan .....	2,939,409	74,573	2.54	78.0
Wisconsin .....	1,768,818	42,601	2.41	84.2
<b>WEST NORTH CENTRAL</b>				
Minnesota .....	1,537,983	24,971	1.62	76.4
Iowa .....	1,506,129	14,790	0.98	64.1
Missouri .....	2,269,657	63,575	2.80	70.8
North Dakota .....	358,182	7,160	2.00	75.7
South Dakota .....	385,808	6,316	1.64	68.1
Nebraska .....	812,450	11,896	1.48	62.7
Kansas .....	1,130,224	17,489	1.55	49.8
<b>SOUTH ATLANTIC</b>				
Delaware .....	148,792	7,520	5.05	72.5
Maryland .....	996,928	46,912	4.71	76.6
District of Columbia .....	341,465	6,456	1.89	77.7
Virginia .....	1,360,893	140,450	10.80	63.2
West Virginia .....	900,987	56,853	6.31	65.4
North Carolina .....	1,542,125	202,223	13.11	49.9
South Carolina .....	819,384	152,312	24.68	59.9
Georgia .....	1,498,567	175,072	11.68	64.5
Florida .....	866,198	71,543	8.26	74.7
<b>EAST SOUTH CENTRAL</b>				
Kentucky .....	1,422,434	114,905	8.08	67.2
Tennessee .....	1,418,144	126,924	8.95	51.5
Alabama .....	1,348,401	213,924	15.87	55.5
Mississippi .....	1,031,547	173,138	16.78	56.0
<b>WEST SOUTH CENTRAL</b>				
Arkansas .....	968,231	84,197	8.70	52.2
Louisiana .....	1,134,852	191,249	16.85	81.6
Oklahoma .....	1,287,131	45,087	3.50	54.5
Texas .....	3,220,880	254,099	7.89	60.4
<b>MOUNTAIN</b>				
Montana .....	318,611	6,989	2.19	80.4
Idaho .....	246,770	3,520	1.43	66.8
Wyoming .....	132,954	2,643	1.99	77.8
Colorado .....	623,523	21,608	3.47	60.6
New Mexico .....	216,956	36,306	16.73	75.1
Arizona .....	244,115	28,992	11.88	73.4
Utah .....	264,498	4,155	1.57	68.9
Nevada .....	60,794	3,191	5.25	88.2
<b>PACIFIC</b>				
Washington .....	1,010,167	12,634	1.25	76.1
Oregon .....	621,375	7,371	1.19	69.7
California .....	3,864,388	120,212	3.11	76.7
Totals and Averages .....	72,943,624	3,863,215	5.30	73.5

TABLE III

B—Percentage of persons 21 years of age and over.  
 G—Personal and corporation income tax returns—% of total.  
 H—Ratio of income tax returns to number of persons 21 years of age and over.

C—Literary Digest poll—percentage favoring repeal.

STATES	B	G	H	C
<b>NEW ENGLAND</b>				
Maine .....	0.668	0.34	0.51	69.5
New Hampshire .....	.403	.13	.32	68.7
Vermont .....	.302	.09	.30	69.6
Massachusetts .....	3.683	4.50	1.22	78.6
Rhode Island .....	.577	.58	1.01	84.3
Connecticut .....	1.351	1.82	1.35	84.3
<b>MIDDLE ATLANTIC</b>				
New York .....	11.163	34.89	3.13	84.7
New Jersey .....	3.444	3.96	1.15	85.4
Pennsylvania .....	7.755	8.55	1.10	74.7
<b>EAST NORTH CENTRAL</b>				
Ohio .....	5.665	5.12	.90	72.5
Indiana .....	2.746	.98	.36	67.9
Illinois .....	6.638	9.62	1.45	81.0
Michigan .....	4.030	5.79	1.44	78.0
Wisconsin .....	2.425	1.38	.57	84.2
<b>WEST NORTH CENTRAL</b>				
Minnesota .....	2.108	1.23	.58	76.4
Iowa .....	2.065	0.55	.27	64.1
Missouri .....	3.112	2.00	.64	70.8
North Dakota .....	.491	.02	.04	75.7
South Dakota .....	.529	.03	.06	68.1
Nebraska .....	1.114	.21	.19	62.7
Kansas .....	1.550	.64	.41	49.8
<b>SOUTH ATLANTIC</b>				
Delaware .....	.204	1.39	6.81	72.5
Maryland .....	1.367	1.43	1.05	76.6
District of Columbia .....	.468	.59	1.26	77.7
Virginia .....	1.783	.75	.42	63.2
West Virginia .....	1.235	.36	.29	65.4
North Carolina .....	2.114	.72	.34	49.9
South Carolina .....	1.123	.11	.10	59.9
Georgia .....	2.054	.46	.22	64.5
Florida .....	1.187	.42	.35	74.7
<b>EAST SOUTH CENTRAL</b>				
Kentucky .....	1.950	.59	.30	67.2
Tennessee .....	1.944	.54	.28	51.5
Alabama .....	1.849	.30	.16	55.5
Mississippi .....	1.414	.08	.06	56.0
<b>WEST SOUTH CENTRAL</b>				
Arkansas .....	1.327	.10	.08	52.2
Louisiana .....	1.556	.45	.29	81.6
Oklahoma .....	1.765	.62	.35	54.5
Texas .....	4.416	1.40	.32	60.4
<b>MOUNTAIN</b>				
Montana .....	.437	.11	.25	80.4
Idaho .....	.338	.03	.09	66.8
Wyoming .....	.182	.04	.22	77.8
Colorado .....	.855	.45	.53	60.6
New Mexico .....	.297	.04	.13	75.1
Arizona .....	.335	.11	.33	73.4
Utah .....	.363	.13	.36	68.9
Nevada .....	.083	.05	.60	88.2
<b>PACIFIC</b>				
Washington .....	1.385	.51	.37	76.1
Oregon .....	.852	.22	.26	69.7
California .....	5.298	5.35	1.01	76.7
Totals and Averages .....	100.000	*99.78	.....	73.5

\* Difference (0.22%) not attributable to States.

TABLE IV

J—Percentage of urban population—1930 U. S. Census.

C—Literary Digest poll—percentage favoring repeal.

STATES	J	C
<b>NEW ENGLAND</b>		
Maine .....	40.3	69.5
New Hampshire .....	58.7	68.7
Vermont .....	33.0	69.6
Massachusetts .....	90.2	78.6
Rhode Island .....	92.4	84.3
Connecticut .....	70.4	84.3
<b>MIDDLE ATLANTIC</b>		
New York .....	83.6	84.7
New Jersey .....	82.6	85.4
Pennsylvania .....	67.8	74.7
<b>EAST NORTH CENTRAL</b>		
Ohio .....	67.8	72.5
Indiana .....	55.5	67.9
Illinois .....	73.9	81.0
Michigan .....	68.2	78.0
Wisconsin .....	52.9	84.2
<b>WEST NORTH CENTRAL</b>		
Minnesota .....	49.0	76.4
Iowa .....	39.6	64.1
Missouri .....	51.2	70.8
North Dakota .....	16.6	75.7
South Dakota .....	18.9	68.1
Nebraska .....	35.3	62.7
Kansas .....	38.8	49.8
<b>SOUTH ATLANTIC</b>		
Delaware .....	51.7	72.5
Maryland .....	59.8	76.6
District of Columbia .....	100.0	77.7
Virginia .....	32.4	63.2
West Virginia .....	28.4	65.4
North Carolina .....	25.5	49.9
South Carolina .....	21.3	59.9
Georgia .....	30.8	64.5
Florida .....	51.7	74.7
<b>EAST SOUTH CENTRAL</b>		
Kentucky .....	30.6	67.2
Tennessee .....	34.3	51.5
Alabama .....	28.1	55.5
Mississippi .....	16.9	56.0
<b>WEST SOUTH CENTRAL</b>		
Arkansas .....	20.6	52.2
Louisiana .....	39.7	81.6
Oklahoma .....	34.3	54.5
Texas .....	41.0	60.4
<b>MOUNTAIN</b>		
Montana .....	33.7	80.4
Idaho .....	29.1	66.8
Wyoming .....	31.1	77.8
Colorado .....	50.2	60.6
New Mexico .....	25.2	75.1
Arizona .....	34.4	73.4
Utah .....	52.4	68.9
Nevada .....	37.8	88.2
<b>PACIFIC</b>		
Washington .....	56.6	76.1
Oregon .....	51.3	69.7
California .....	73.3	76.7
Averages .....	*56.2	73.5

\*Continental United States.

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